

Rockford Ills  
May 10<sup>th</sup> /81

My dear Sir.

I had intended to write to you to-day. Only got back from Fortitude last night and wished to re-examine some specimens left there before writing. This Willow of yours which occurs in the Rocky Mtns, Utah (Jones, New Mexico) (Greene) &c attaining a height of 15 ft or more with stems 5 in thick is Salix flavescens Nutt. From the description and his remarks it is clear that Nuttall had this Rocky Mtns form in view. I wrote to Prof Sargent when reporting upon his collection of Willows from the far west that I thought it would be well to separate the Pacific Coast forms and restore the old name of the *flora Borealis Americana* - notwithstanding the objections urged by Anderson - but upon a careful examination of all the material in my herbarium I am now convinced that this can

not be done. The two forms stand  
in very much the same relation to  
each other as do S. Scouleriana of  
the Rocky Mts and S. lasiantha and  
var laevigolia of California & Oregon  
and also in like case it is on the  
Sierra Nevada that the intermediates  
are found. If I had only possessed  
the specimens from James Greene, Mrs Austin  
Prof Sayers & myself which I now have  
at the time I was so puzzled to know  
what disposition to make of this  
species in the Flora of Cal I would  
have described the plants of the  
Rocky Mts and the Sierra Nevada as  
S. fluvescens ~~trita~~ typica and the  
Coast forms as a var or sub species  
Scouleriana. Nuttall evidently intended  
his S. stagnalis to cover the Oregon  
Willow but the description is almost  
too ambiguous for preservation - and yet  
it would need to be cleared away  
before we could come down to  
S. brachystachya Nutt. - It is in the  
character of the aments (clearly described  
by Hooker) that this species is distinguish-  
ed from all other known species  
of the Pacific Coast - The leaves

furnish no safe distinctions. For  
occasionally the leaves of Scutleriana  
are quite as saturate beneath as  
those of Sutchensis. There is only  
this objection — if Scutleriana is  
good enough for a variety name then  
"by the same token" it should stand  
for the type of the species and the  
Rocky Mtn Willow become its variety  
flavescens — and this is precisely the  
point which I feel unable to  
decide! My conviction is that the  
two can not be separated as ~~two~~  
good species — the characters by which  
at first sight we would seek to  
distinguish them are inconstant — do  
not correspond with each other — and  
fail entirely when we come to the  
specimens from the Sierra Nevada —  
The question of precedence you, and  
Prof Sargent are better qualified to  
decide than I —

I will take the liberty of moving  
this to Prof S. — to be handed to you.  
Did you get my Willows — and how did  
the elucidation of the much vexed S. myricoides  
Muhl strike you?

Yours very truly  
May 10/81. M. S. Leitch



Prof James Watson

Bellevue of  
Prof D. V. Daye